

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 SAJ-01 OMB-01 /084 W

----- 051600

R 171850Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8891

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR, SP

SUBJECT: ICF AND MICHELIN PLANTS

1. THE MICHELIN WORLD COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHEMICAL FEDERATION (ICF) MET ON 9 MARCH IN THE CFDT HEADQUARTERS UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF RAYMOND PINAY (COUNCIL PRESIDENT) AND DECIDED TO CALL ON THE MICHELIN FRENCH WORKERS TO ORGANIZE WORK STOPPAGES DURING THE WEEK OF 15 MARCH IN SUPPORT OF THE SPANISH WORKERS OF THE FOUR MICHELIN PLANTS IN SPAIN WHICH HAVE BEEN ON STRIKE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY. IN ADDITION TO CHARLES LEVINSON, ICF SECRETARY GENERAL, SPANISH CLANDESTINE TRADE UNIONS PARTICIPATED ALSO IN THIS MEETING, NAMELY UGT, USO AND THE BASQUE STV. FO'S CHEMICAL WORKERS FEDERATION, ALTHOUGH ICF AFFILIATE, WAS NOT INVITED TO THE MEETING AND IS WRITING STRONG LETTER OF PROTEST TO ICF. LEVINSON ENCOURAGED SUCH PROTEST FOR REPRESENTATIONS TO CFDT WHICH OBVIOUSLY RESPONSIBLE FOR IGNORING FO. IN THE COURSE OF A PRESS CONFERENCE LEVINSON AND PINAY MADE

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A GREAT ADO ABOUT ICF'S READINESS TO MOBILIZE THE

MICHELIN WORKERS IN THE 15 COUNTRIES IN WHICH MICHELIN PLANTS ARE LOCATED TO SUPPORT THE SPANISH STRIKERS AND TO PREVENT THE COMPANY FROM SHIFTING PRODUCTION TO COUNTRIES WHERE LABOR COSTS ARE LOWEST. ACCORDINGLY, MICHELIN WORKERS WERE URGED TO REFUSE OVERTIME AND NEW MACHINERY DESIGNED TO OVERCOME PRODUCTION LOSS BECAUSE OF STRIKES IN MICHELIN PLANTS IN ANY OF THE 15 COUNTRIES INVOLVED.

2. PINAY STATED THAT A DECISION WITH REGARD TO THE SPECIFIC DATE ON WHICH WORK STOPPAQES IN FRANCE WERE TO TAKE PLACE AND THE DURATION THEREOF, NAMELY OF ONE OR TWO HOURS, WILL BE MADE AT A LATER DATE FOLLOWING CONTACT WITH CGT WHICH HAD ALREADY TAKEN THE INITIATIVE IN MICHELIN'S MAIN PLANT IN CLERMONT FERRAND TO CALL FOR "A DAY OF ACTION" DURING THE WEEK OF 15 MARCH.

3. LABATT HAD OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH FO SHOP STEWARD IN MICHELIN PLANT IN CLERMONT FERRAND WHO CONFIRMED THAT CGT INFLUENCE IN THE PLANT IS NEGLIGIBLE AND THAT GOES ALSO FOR ICF AND ITS AFFILIATES IN FRANCE (CFDT AND FO). INTERESTINGLY, HE ATTRIBUTED

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THIS MORE TO RANK AND FILE RESISTANCE TO OBVIOUS ATTEMPTS BY THE UNIONS TO PROMOTE WORK STOPPAGES MORE OUT OF INTEREST IN THE PUBLIC IMAGE THAN IN THE WORKERS' REAL INTERESTS IN A TIGHTLY CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT LIKE THE MICHELIN PLANT.

4. UNABLE TO RESIST OVERSTATEMENTS, LEVINSON WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT "THE COUNTERPOWER THAT THE ICF IS ORGANIZING" IS THE ONLY MEANS BY WHICH MICHELIN CAN BE BROUGHT TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. ALLEGING THAT MICHELIN REFUSES TO NEGOTIATE AND FOLLOWS REPRESSIVE POLICIES, HE ADDED THAT THE COMPANY CAN BE BROUGHT TO REASON ONLY IF ITS PLACE IN THE WORLD PRODUCTION OF TIRES IS THREATENED.

5. COMMENT: TWO POINTS NEED TO BE UNDERSCORED. LEVINSON'S STAR NO LONGER SHINES AS IT USED TO AND EVEN FRENCH REPORTERS WHO IN THE RECENT PAST HAVE LAPPED HIS IDEOLOGICAL RHETORIC ARE BEGINNING TO SEE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THROUGH HIM AND RECOGNIZE HIS SUPERFICIALITY AND THE ENORMOUS GAP THAT CONTINUES TO EXIST BETWEEN ICF'S CLAIMS AND TRUE CAPACITY TO PERFORM. HOWEVER, LEVINSON, WHO HAS PROVEN HIMSELF A MASTER IN PUBLIC RELATIONS, CONTINUES TO USE PRESS CONFERENCES FOR THE PURPOSE OF KEEPING HIS OWN IMAGE ALIVE. IT IS OF INTEREST NEVERTHELESS THAT NONE OF THE FRENCH NEWS-PAPERS REPORTED THE ICF PRESS CONFERENCE OR LEVINSON.

6. THE SECOND POINT IS THAT ONCE AGAIN CGT WAS ABLE TO BEAT TO THE DRAW ITS DEMOCRATIC COMPETITORS INCLUDING LEVINSON'S ICF BY ISSUING THE PERENNIAL COMMUNIQUE WHICH MAKES THE RIGHT NOISES OF SOLIDARITY WITH SOME STRIKERS SOME PLACE, THEREBY PROJECTING THE IMAGE OF AN EVER PRESENT DEFENDER OF THE WORKERS EVERYWHERE.
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